

This interview of LT [REDACTED] USN, Ops Officer and CDO of USS COLE on 12 October 2000, was conducted on 16 November 2000 by LT Michael Navarre, JAGC, USNR. I hereby giving the following voluntary statement:

1. Were you briefed on the threat situation in Aden?
NO specific briefing on threat.

What was your understanding of the threat?

Threat was based on Threatcon Bravo, general heightened tension, no specific threat against COLE or US forces. Do not remember if COLE got the NCIS threat assessment for Aden. Got the LogReq reply the night before from the US Embassy, not sure about the NCIS assessment. I am the OPS officer and monitored all message traffic. I would have remembered if the threat assessment came in.

2. Were you briefed on the security/force protection plan for Aden?

I was the CDO and knew the contents of the Force protection plan from talking to the Weapons Officer. LT [REDACTED] is WEPS and Force Protection Officer. The briefings were given LT [REDACTED] and AFPO, LTJG [REDACTED] there were at least two FPO briefing. Force protection plan was approved by Fifth Fleet. The Duty Action leader that day, OSCS [REDACTED] briefed the watch standers and the sentries.

3. Were the rules of engagement for small boat threats ever discussed with you?

Not specifically for small boats. We talked about ROE for in general at least twice. I briefed ROE one time. Each morning we had briefings on relevant topics. CO called it Arabian University. At least two of these were ROE briefings. I gave the ROE briefing from standing CJCS ROE research.

What was your understanding of the rules?

Right to respond to hostile act and hostile intent. Hostile intent means to me imminent threat of use of force against us. We do not have to absorb the first shot. If someone lifted a weapon as if firing at the ship, we could

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respond with deadly force. Our response would have to follow the rules of necessity and proportionality. Necessity meaning we had to use force to stop the threat. Proportionality means respond with the minimum amount of force needed to stop the threat. In briefing I taught I as an example such as if someone throws a rock, you cannot shoot a missile at them. Hostile intent is left vague because the on scene commander needs latitude to defend his unit under the ROE.

4. What was your understanding of how you were to keep unauthorized boats away from the ship?

If the boat did not show hostile intent verbal warnings or waving. For verbal warnings I may have been able to enlist the help of the husbanding agent on the pier because we did not have anyone able to speak the language.

If they did show hostile intent, then we could respond under the ROE with the force we need to defend the ship. An example might be a threat from a small boat of a rifle armed person could be met with proportional response from the ship. Proportional response would be another rifle or machine gun.

Was this discussed with you prior to your assuming the watch?

Not that day. However, prior briefings discussed all of these topics. The small boat threat was not specifically addressed but we talked about necessity and proportionality and all the key concepts ad nauseum.

5. Were you aware of what boats were authorized to be along side?

Yes.

Who was deciding what was authorized?

The default is that no one should be alongside unless they are doing something for us. No one is specifically authorized unless they were designated in the LogReq reply. In this LogReq we requested a pilot boat and two tugs. The pilot knew we would need the two smaller line boats because of prior experience so he asked that they come along side. We requested the garbage barge. The SUPPO, LT [REDACTED] informed me about the garbage barge being authorized.

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Did you ever inform the watch section of what boats were authorized?

I do not know if the watch section ever got word that the garbage barge was authorized. The other boats were necessary for getting in and out of port. The sea and anchor detail would have known about them. I did not specifically inform them.

6. How many boats do you remember coming along side? What order, and what were they doing?

a. Pilot boat arrived first. Delivered the pilot. I did not see who was on the boat other than the pilot.

b. Two tugs arrived approximately ten to fifteen minutes after the pilot, about halfway into the harbor.

c. Two working boats arrived next and helped us with the mooring lines. They arrived after we were alongside the pier. They received our lines to tie us up to the buoys.

d. After sea and anchor detail was secured, around 1015 to 1030, the garbage barge arrived. I do not know of the exact time. The garbage barge departed before the explosion.

e. To my knowledge no other boats came alongside. Any boats approaching the ship should have been reported to the OOD, SK1 [REDACTED] and to me. I did not receive any reports of boats other than those in a. through d. approaching the ship.

7. Did you ever monitor the boats along side?

No, the only one that was alongside was the garbage barge. I did not know the exact time it came and left. Other than that, there was nothing else to monitor. There was traffic in the channel close by, but nothing that caught anyone's eye enough to report to me.

Other:

Nothing eventful preceded the attack. Thirty to forty-five minutes before the attack I talked with the CO about the sea and anchor detail. The CO seemed frustrated with the harbor pilot then and on the radio during the evolution. The pilot did not want to turn the ship around, but the CO wanted the ship pointing bow out. The CO wanted the ship pointing bow out so that we could leave expeditiously if a specific threat arose. The CO had to lie to the harbor pilot, telling him that we had to be starboard side to due to the fueling system line up. The pilot did have the tugs turn us around and we ended up facing out of the harbor.



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16 NOV 00

Date

Subscribed and sworn before me this 16th day of November 2000.



LT Michael J. Navarre, JAGC, USNR